

Edinburgh College offers a lifeline with language lessons

✘ Edinburgh College is calling for volunteers to become English language tutors on its home learning scheme, which can offer a lifeline to people within the local community.

By bringing English lessons into the student's own home, the Edinburgh College Home Learning Scheme provides the chance of a fresh future for students and their families who may otherwise struggle to get to a classroom or community learning centre.

With almost one million immigrants living in the UK who do not speak a basic level of English, the Edinburgh College Home Learning Scheme can provide vital language skills to allow people to integrate into the local community.

Jean Howat, English for Speakers of Other Languages Lecturer at Edinburgh College, explained:- "Not only does learning English with the Edinburgh College Home Learning Scheme provide our students with opportunities for work, but it can also offer a possible end to isolation within a new and unknown country."

Arlene Raeburn, Edinburgh College Home Learning Scheme volunteer, said:- "I wanted to volunteer as I know how it feels to be living as a stranger in a country where you don't speak the language, after I moved to Oman with my husband for his work. I quickly found out that if you don't speak even a basic level of the language, you can feel very lonely and like an outsider."

"When I returned to Scotland, I found out about the Edinburgh College volunteering scheme and I thought this would be a

perfect opportunity to really make a difference to newcomers to Scotland – to put people at ease when they come into a new country.”

Arlene added: “I’ve found that being a volunteer is very rewarding. I feel a sense of happiness as I watch my students growing in confidence. Teaching has also taught me so much about other cultures and ways of life, which has been really interesting.”

One of Arlene’s students, Zarina Arif, benefited in particular from the Edinburgh College Home Learning Scheme due to the illness of her husband during her English tuition.

Zarina, who is originally from Pakistan, said: “For me, learning English with Arlene was really helpful. I have three children and can’t leave the house most of the time, so I struggled to learn on my own and really didn’t have much confidence.”

“Arlene’s tuition was all the more helpful when I discovered that my husband had primary liver cancer. This was a difficult time for my family, and of course we had a lot of questions for the doctors.”

“The English I had learned helped me to communicate with the medical team and understand my husband’s condition. Thankfully, he is now back to full health but I will never forget the help Arlene gave me during this time, both personally and educationally.”

Zarina added: “I now feel I have the confidence to leave the house and do the things I need to do, like getting on the bus, speaking to my children’s teachers and booking doctor’s appointments. I also have great plans for the future – I hope to use my language skills to study at Edinburgh College and eventually become a beautician.”

Submitted by [Susannah Nichol](#)

